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ABSTRACT

Four books focusing on ethical issues in collegiate sports are reviewed: "Paterno by the Book," "Personal Fouls," "Never Too Young to Die: The Death of Len Bias," and "Rules of the Game: Ethics in College Sport." The themes of academic standards, student responsibility, the coach's role and responsibilities, the need for reform in college athletics programs, sex discrimination, and racism are discussed briefly, and the extent to which the books address those problems is examined. Requirements for reform are outlined, including administrative insistence on ethical conduct in the athletic programs, board willingness to remove administrators and athletic directors who do not provide ethical oversight, acceptance of responsibility by all parts of the academic community, and facing racism and sexism and all their manifestations in college sports. (MSE)

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Thoughts on four books, and the state of collegiate sport.

"Ethics Shock"

by L. Lee Knefelkamp

The term "ethics shock" is a new one in my home. It describes how I feel after finishing the sports section, replete as it is with the latest revelations of misconduct in collegiate athletics. Post-shock, I wonder whether all the attention that educators are giving to sports reform these days will ever go anywhere.

I know that the problems are not new. Nor are study commissions: in 1929, a Carnegie Foundation report criticized the "rampant professionalism, commercialization, and the exploitation of athletes" evident in intercollegiate athletics at the time. The record shows only the slightest effort at correction of those abuses. Is there any reason to believe that the national commission recently funded by the Knight Foundation to study collegiate sports and to make recommendations for improvement will meet with better success?

I view college athletics with the eye of a developmental psychologist, educated to ask what factors in the campus culture either facilitate or inhibit student intellectual, interpersonal, ethical, and social maturation. From years of talking with them, I know students are well aware of the ethical dilemmas that collegiate athletics poses. They are well aware, too, of our failures and hypocrisies and evasions. Another failed reform movement will confirm it all for another generation of students.

So this is a community issue. No member of the academic community can escape responsibility. What we allow, what standards we demand, describes our values—the value we place on students and the environments we create for them, indeed the value we place on education itself within a wider society.

A plethora of books published in the last year has explored the issue of ethics in college sport. Almost all of them are written by sports columnists for major newspapers or sports magazines, who seem in the ethically precarious position of writing critically about the very sports programs they have helped to promote, indeed whose stature the media requires for reader attention.

I have chosen four of the most recent books as texts for this essay. Each represents a separate voice in the sports community.

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In *Paterno by the Book,* Joe Paterno (with Bernard Asbell) writes from the vantage point of an English major turned highly successful football coach at Penn State.

Sportswriter Peter Golenbock focuses his attention in *Personal Fouls* on the personality and character of Jim Valvano, basketball coach at North Carolina State. (The very threat of publication helped to spur an investigation of the program.)

Lewis Cole, also a sportswriter, tries, in *Never Too Young to Die: The Death of Len Bias,* to understand the personal and environmental factors that led to Len Bias's death from cocaine overdose, and to the University of Maryland's manner of responding to the tragedy.

Finally, in *Rules of the Game: Ethics in College Sport,* editors Richard E. Lapchick and John B. Slaughter offer an anthology of articles on a wide range of ethical, historical, and policy issues in intercollegiate sports. An interview with Lapchick appears elsewhere in this issue; Slaughter, now president of Occidental College, was Maryland's chancellor at the time of Len Bias's death.

It's hard not to like Paterno. I have images of him pacing the sidelines with his pant cuffs rolled up, white socks showing, rumpled and intense. The outspoken Paterno has received good press over the years. His teams win and his players graduate.

In *Paterno by the Book* (Random House, 1989), he writes, "I was determined that we were

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going to have a football team with people who belonged in college." It is commentary enough that he calls this policy—of expecting his athletes not just to pass but to get the grades they are capable of—"the grand experiment." Paterno has been conducting the experiment for twenty years: expecting his players to attend class and study sessions, then (even) to be reflective about their educational experience.

Tales to Be Told

Paterno writes of power and its exercise in interesting ways, contrasting the coach who uses the power of a winning record to recruit and select among the best players and the best student-athletes with the coach who relinquishes power by chasing after players who are not yet academically capable of earning a college degree—coaches who thereby mortgage their programs for a quick-fix winning season.

There are, however, glaring omissions. Paterno speaks forcefully about the necessity for faculty to remain strong in their insistence that academic work is the central mission of the university, and he criticizes sportswriters who collude with the existence of corruption in sports programs. But he ignores altogether issues of racism and sexism. Nor does he write about drugs in sports with any of the frankness he has brought to that subject as a participant in public television roundtables.

Nonetheless, it is refreshing to find a highly visible coach who places a high value on a college education, who takes students and their development seriously.

Contrast the views of Paterno with those of Jim Valvano (1982): "We're not even really a part of the school anymore, anyway. I work for the NC State Athletic Association. That has nothing to do with the university. Our funding is totally independent. You think the chancellor is going to tell me what to do? Who to take into school or not to take into school? I doubt it."

Valvano's boast proved accurate. Last September, after he and chancellor Bruce R. Poulton were singled out for criticism by a University of North Carolina System commission, it was Poulton who had to resign. (Valvano was later removed as athletic director, but allowed to remain as head basketball coach.) The commission found that the university's academic rules had been regularly bent or ignored to keep basketball players eligible and that both the chancellor and the coach had failed to enforce academic standards.

Personal Fouls (Carroll & Graf, 1989) is an ugly book, heaping up details of corruption in the NC State basketball program. Golenbock attacks the fundamental character of the coach, presenting him as a man who lies to recruits by misrepresenting almost everything about what will be expected of them and by making idle promises about their futures. Valvano comes off as a man totally uninterested in the academic performance of his players or in their off-court behavior (which includes a number of documented attacks on women).

Oddly, the book never deals with three central questions: (1) Why was Valvano allowed to be both coach and athletic director, in effect reporting only to himself? (2) Why was the chancellor so deliberately deaf to faculty criticism and suggestions for reform? (3) Why would a university hire and renew a coach whose character has repeatedly been called into question?

These are not just questions for North Carolina State: they are questions that beg for wider address. Peter Golenbock's book, then, rages against abuses in one athletic program but offers no thoughtful alternatives to the culture that produced them in the first place.

When reading about Valvano, I recalled that the University of Maryland gave Lefty Driesell a new ten-year contract the year after he had made intimidating phone calls to a young woman who had pressed charges of attempted rape against one of the basketball players. That contract sent a clear message to the College Park campus: inappropriate behavior, including sexual harassment and worse, will be condoned in a winning basketball coach.

Just one year later, Maryland's administration was confronted with the consequences of sending that message.

Much as Valvano had asserted his independence from the university whose team he coached, "Driesell had acted as an independent agent within the university for years," according to Lewis Cole, in *Never Too Young to Die* (Pantheon, 1989). Cole gives us pages and pages of documentation that Driesell successfully recruited and had admitted unqualified students under one admissions director, then twice got Chancellor Slaughter to overrule the new admissions director who had refused him. One of those students was academically dismissed twice—and reinstated twice upon the Chancellor's intervention.

Like Poulton, Chancellor Slaughter was aware of the academic problems in his basketball program. Yet no major review of the program took place until after Len Bias died.

Bias's death and the aftermath of confusion and cover-up are the heart of Cole's book. What the book does not chronicle are the *years* of faculty and staff time diverted from other University business to the study and possible reform of the Maryland athletic program.

Reports were issued; Driesell was removed from his post as coach. (He retained his annual salary, his TV contract, and the right to run his summer basketball camp using university facilities; a year later he was hired as head coach at James Madison.) Mary-

These editors conclude that individual schools and programs should be left to reform themselves. This seems to me a startling conclusion, particularly after several hundred pages documenting the failure of schools to do just that.

land hired a new coach, who was removed two years later in the wake of new NCAA violations.

One could legitimately ask, what use was made of all the reports and recommendations?

What are the ethical implications of the very existence of Cole's book? Cole pieced together his story from newspaper articles, plus a few original interviews; he offers no significant suggestions of his own for reform. How is this book, even as it decries exploitation in college sports, itself not a form of exploitation?

The themes that emerge from these three books come together in *The Rules of the Game* (ACE/Macmillan, 1989). Lapchick and Slaughter's wide-ranging collection reviews the history of intercollegiate athletics and provides an agenda of major ethical challenges: equity, race, recruiting, drugs, sports agents, and academic preparation—both prior to admission and after "graduation." A final section on reform makes recommendations.

These editors conclude that individual schools and programs should be left to reform themselves. This seems to me a startling conclusion, particularly after several hundred pages documenting the failure of schools to do just that.

Addressing the "-isms" of College Sport

Without commenting on *Rules* chapter by chapter, let me highlight several themes it addresses that are only implicit in the other books.

The ethical dilemma of blatant sexism is rarely raised or treated seriously when the subject is college sports. *Rules* contains fourteen chapters (just one by and about women), several of which reveal startling statistics:

- In 1972, more than 90 percent of women's teams were coached by women; in 1988, only 43 percent.
- Fewer than 1 percent of the coaches of men's teams are women.
- In 1988, there were 5,757 head coaching jobs for women's teams—up 52 from the year before—and yet women actually held 7 fewer of those jobs than in the previous year.
- Only 16 percent of women's sports programs are headed by a female administrator.

It seems the decade-old merger of men's and women's sports programs has resulted in what one author calls the "submerged development of women's programs and an actual reduction of employment opportunities for female coaches."

Rules of the Game documents an "old boy" network of male coaches and athletic directors who use different methods for selecting male and female candidates, who often use sex stereotypes and homophobic language when referring to female coaches or candidates, and who often view strong female applicants as potential troublemakers (*feminist* is code for "troublemaker"). College athletics seems a bailiwick untouched by affirmative action, its record actually worsening in the last twenty years.

While racism is a factor in sports, little evidence exists that it is taken as seriously as it should be. Of 54,000 head/assistant coaching positions in the United States, only 2 percent of these are held by blacks. Stereotypes still exist about racial "types" and differential athletic attributes. *Rules of the Game,* to its credit, confronts the deep racial prejudices that have produced the present collegiate system of recruitment and abuse.

We cannot have a meaningful discussion of athletic reform without facing both racism and sexism; nor can we have any hope of deeper reform unless we also confront the complex intersection of gender, race, and socioeconomic class in modern sports.

A 1989 NCAA national survey of 644 male and female basketball players revealed that 43 percent saw nothing wrong with accepting money under the table, and that the percentage was greatly influenced by the confluence of gender, race, and low socioeconomic class. These students were well aware of the money universities made from sports, were able to contrast that with their own economic situation, and felt entitled to some of the financial proceeds.

Is Reform Possible?

To return to my initial question—will the current reform movement be more successful than those of the past?—I admit I am not hopeful. I see the following as necessary for true reform:

- Presidents, provosts, and deans must do something they have been reluctant to do historically: insist on ethical conduct from their athletic programs. This means taking oversight responsibility, challenging the big-business aspects of college sports, and fielding teams with the ability to succeed academically.
- Boards of Regents must be willing to remove any administrator or athletic director who does not provide ethical oversight.
- All members of the higher education community must accept responsibility for speaking out against abuses, and for taking action to punish abusers and reward those who administer ethically. To become more knowledgeable, we must become students of the issues. And, we must facilitate serious study of student-athletes; their stories must be told so that the higher education culture can better respond to their needs.
- We must face the very real issues of racism and sexism and all their manifestations in college sports. Any failure to engage these issues will doom any reform movement.

Is higher education prepared to meet these challenges? For the sake of both our student-athletes and the educational enterprise, I hope so. ■